



The Top 5 Tips for Being Well Prepared – using the Circle of Excellence

Background to the Circle of Excellence

The ‘Circle of Excellence’ is an NLP tool for enabling you to get yourself into the ‘right state’ for any particular scenario. For example to enable you to present confidently and fluently, so that you can make the perfect golf shot, to give you the resources you need to be a positive influence in team meetings (the list of potential uses is endless).

So often individuals underachieve, by not accessing all the resources they have within themselves. It is possible that they are unaware of the resources within, or maybe they have not thought about how transferable some of the resources are from completely unrelated areas of their lives. It is also possible that they do not know how to access those resources at the point at which they require to use them.

Using the tips outlined here, you can make your preparation for any event even more effective, by adding the Circle of Excellence to your schedule.

The following five tips outline, in brief the ‘Circle of Excellence’ technique, which is a form of ‘Anchoring’, which will enable you and your clients to access the right state, at the right time, in the right place.

1. Know how you want to feel

This might sound a very obvious place to start and it is an important stage to consider. By identifying how you wish to feel, it means that you can break down those desired states and access them one by one from other life experiences.

Ask yourself:

‘How do I want to feel in a particular situation, (e.g. confident, excited, focused, fluent might be the feelings you would select for presenting)

‘What states would make me even more effective in ...’

If you are still unsure ask someone, who excels in what you want to do how they feel when they do the task well.

An example of a desired state might be:

‘I am just about to give a presentation to 500 people and I want to feel confident, fluent and respected’

2. Design a ‘Circle’ that works as your anchor

An anchor is a stimulus, which generates a particular state inside you. It can be tactile (a particular way of squeezing your thumb and middle finger together for example is a common tactile anchor used). It can be auditory, saying something particular to yourself, in a certain way (even if this is a quiet, internal ‘yes’ to set yourself up to something you know you can do well). Anchors can also be visual (a particular image that you see, or an actual visual cue that you know will be present when you need it).

The advantage of setting a ‘Circle of Excellence’ is that you can ensure it is always with you when you need it. You can design it in such a way that it can make use of your preferred system of processing information. If you know you are highly visual, you can build in a visual anchor alongside the circle for example.

My suggestion as a starting point would be to draw an imaginary circle on the floor, which you step into when you wish to both ‘set’ and ‘access’ your anchored states. The circle can then be shrunk down and placed on a finger to transport around with you and can be taken off and laid in front of you when you stand to present, sit in a meeting, stand on the putting green, or whatever the appropriate scenario is where you wish to use those resources.

3. Anchor your desired states

This is the crucial part of the technique.

Lay your circle in front of you and think of a time when you absolutely had the desired state (to continue our example, you might start with confidence). This does not have to be confidence in presenting – it can

confidence the state or feeling in ANY situation. When did you have an experience when you felt really confident about something – can you think of that time?

When you have thought of a specific time – just ask yourself:

What did I see?

What did I hear?

What did I feel?

When you start to feel that state reproduce itself inside you (and it will), step into your circle and remain there until you feel the feelings subside, then step out.

Repeat this AT LEAST three times for each of the desired states linked with the activity you are preparing for. (N.B. This works even better if you think of a different time when you experienced that state for each of those three times).

If it is useful to add in other anchors, such as an auditory anchor, where you might say something specific to yourself as you step into the circle, or a visual anchor, where you see a particular image as you step into the circle, then add that in to further strengthen that anchoring process.

Tip: If you are doing this with someone else – make sure you use their own words back to them when you are talking through the questions. If they are anchoring confidence for example – ask them about a time they felt confident. Also make sure if more than one state is being anchored, that all three are compatible and can exist simultaneously.

If you are unable to think of a time when you experienced the desired state, imagine what it would feel like, or what someone else would feel when they had that experience: this can work just as well as having had the experience yourself.

Over time you can add even more strength to your anchor. When you successfully complete the presentation (or activity) and you felt confident, fluent and respected, just step into your circle and ‘stack’ that feeling so it will be even easier next time round to access that state.

Whenever you finish with your circle, shrink it down and place it safely on your finger, so it is always there for you.

4. Test your anchor

Some people need to be convinced that tools and techniques work and one way of testing this is to go and do something else having set your anchor / Circle of Excellence. After a short period of time, just think about the task for which you were preparing and take your Circle off your finger and lay it before you and step into it – as if you were doing that task there and then and consider how you feel. You will find that you immediately feel those desired states.

If you do not get the intensity of feeling you desired, repeat the process, paying as much attention as possible to the original states that you recalled – really connect with them emotionally and allow yourself to feel them, see how you looked, hear what you heard. Sometimes it takes a few more experiences to be stacked, before you feel the intensity of feeling you really desire.

5. Remember that your resource exists and use it

Now that you have an anchor or ‘Circle of Excellence’ in place, remember to use it. Of course you can set different circles for different contexts. Calm and relaxed for getting to sleep, alert and focused for playing squash, competent and experienced when resuscitating a patient – whatever the scenario, you can set a Circle (or other suitable anchor) to help you through a task which in the past you felt you had problems with.

Taking a moment to take your circle off your finger and to step into it – experiencing those states, will be invaluable to help you to perform the task to the level and quality you wish to perform it.

Resources

Anchoring is well referenced in the literature and you can find it in many books on NLP. Below are a few websites, which describe anchoring, which may give you even more information, or new insights into the potential value of this simple, yet incredibly effective technique.

http://www.trans4mind.com/personal_development/mindMastery/anchoring.htm

http://www.nlp-hypnosis.ws/nlp_anchoring.htm

<http://www.renewal.ca/nlp31.htm>

I would urge you to give it a go. If you have not used this technique before you will be amazed at just how effective it can be.

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If you have found this guide helpful and would like further information on any aspect of coaching, please contact: www.associationforcoaching.com

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